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CIA/RR CB 60-39

Copy No. 29
6 July 1960

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CURRENT SUPPORT BRIEF

ECONOMIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CURRENT REORGANIZATION OF THE
EAST GERMAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND REPORTS

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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CONFIDENTIALECONOMIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CURRENT REORGANIZATION OF THE
EAST GERMAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

During the past several years, the East German regime has been gradually reorganizing its educational system with the aim of producing a labor force that is better equipped both technically and ideologically for life in a communist state. The experimental phase of the reorganization culminated in the promulgation of the "Decree Concerning the Further Socialist Transformation of the Universities and Institutes of University Rank" 1/ in February 1958 and the enactment of a "Law for the Socialist Development of the School System" in December 1959. 2/ A reform bringing vocational and technical education into line with the revised system of general and higher education is still in preparation.

General Education

In East Germany, compulsory school attendance begins at age 6. Until 1959, the basic unit in the general education system was the compulsory 8-year elementary school (Figure 1). After completion of this school the pupil could enter the 2-year middle school or the 4-year upper school, or he could become an apprentice with compulsory attendance at a part-time trade school (Berufsschule). Graduates from the 2-year middle school could enter either the 11th grade of the upper school or a full-time technical school (Fachschule), or could go to work and attend a part-time trade school. Graduation from a technical or an upper school was the usual prerequisite for study on the university level, although "politically reliable" children of workers could also qualify for a university without having attended an upper or technical school by completing one of the 3-year "workers'-and-peasants' schools" (Arbeiter-und-Bauern-Fakultaeten).

The law of December 1959 provides for two types of general education schools (Figure 2): a 10-year "polytechnic upper school" and a 12-year "extended upper school." The polytechnic upper school, which replaces the former elementary and middle schools, is to be extended gradually throughout the country until it is fully established in the fall of 1964. All children who do not attend the extended upper school must finish the 10-year polytechnic upper school after which they must go to work as an apprentice and attend a 2-3 year, part-time trade school.

Graduation from a polytechnic upper school will be one of the prerequisites for formal vocational training and for admission to any school on a higher level. Graduates from the 10-year schools with a minimum of two years of vocational training are eligible to enter first a specialized technical school and then an institution on the university level, if their academic ability, diligence, and "political reliability" are considered satisfactory. In addition, workers' children who finish their vocational training may enter a university after graduation from a workers'-and-peasants' school.

The reform legislation retains the traditional 12-year school, now called the "extended upper school." This school, which has a mathematical and natural-science branch and a modern or classical language branch, prepares its pupils for direct entrance into a technical school or a university. Since graduates from the extended upper school have had neither regular work experience nor vocational schooling, they must work for a year as a production worker in socialized industry or agriculture before admission to a university. 3/

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The reform legislation stresses the importance of "socialist" and polytechnic education "from kindergarten to university." The school program includes a special course "introduction to socialist production," several weeks of work in a factory or on a farm, and other "productive labor" at all grades. In the first six grades "productive labor" consists of work in the school garden, manual training, and work excursions to farms and factories. From the seventh grade on, pupils must spend one day each school week in a state factory or on a socialized farm.

Higher Education

The East German system of higher education includes six universities and a large number of specialized schools of university rank (Hochschulen) such as institutes of technology, mining, architecture, pedagogics, economics, and art. The 1958 decree governing the status of the universities and institutes defines the function of higher education as that of developing a large and efficient intelligentsia loyally attached to the regime. The decree also placed the universities and many of the institutes under the direct control of the State Secretariat for Universities and Technical Schools. These measures thus have removed the last vestiges of academic autonomy and freedom of teaching and learning that still remained in East Germany. All university students are required to take courses in "Foundations of Marxism-Leninism," "Foundations of Political Economy," and "Dialectical and Historical Materialism" and must learn enough Russian to read the literature in their field. Students also must work at a state enterprise or farm from time to time, during the school year, as well as during vacations.

Economic Implications of the Reform

The primary impetus for the current educational reform stems from the regime's conviction that achievement of its long-run political and economic objectives requires a fundamental re-orientation and re-training of East Germany's youth. Therefore, the revised curricula provide for vigorous ideological indoctrination, as well as for increased emphasis on formal vocational training and work experience at all school levels.

Over the long-run the new educational system should contribute materially to raising the level of skill and productivity of the labor force. As a result of a longer and more technical education, extensive vocational training and work experience during the period of schooling, future new entrants to the labor force will be better prepared for their jobs and will require less on-the-job training. They also probably will prove more flexible and capable of adjusting with greater ease to the job-shifts inherent in rapid technological change.

By increasing the period of compulsory education from 8 years to 10 years, the educational reform will defer by two years the entrance of basic school graduates into the labor force. In 1958, roughly 250,000 persons age 14 and 15 were working; under the reorganization they will be required to attend school. The gradual decline in the number of those young persons in the labor force as the reform progresses will aggravate the already tight labor supply situation that will prevail in East Germany during the period of the current 7-year plan (1959-65). During this period the labor force is expected to decline by at least 700,000--without regard to the effects of the school reform--largely because of a World War II caused decrease in the population of working age (15-65). 4/

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The regime apparently regards the small decrease in the labor supply that will result from the longer period of schooling as the price that must be paid to achieve its long-range objectives for the ideological and vocational training of youth. In addition to the better preparation of young entrants to the labor force, however, the school reform includes several features that will help to cushion the impact of the longer period of schooling. First, the reforms will be introduced gradually. Second, young people are being encouraged to obtain a technical school or university education at night or by correspondence. Thirdly, students from the seventh grade on will work part-time in plants and on farms, although it remains to be seen whether the part-time work of students will contribute materially to production. Finally, the regime has started to introduce "extended day schools," which, by providing day care for young children, will permit more women to go to work. 5/

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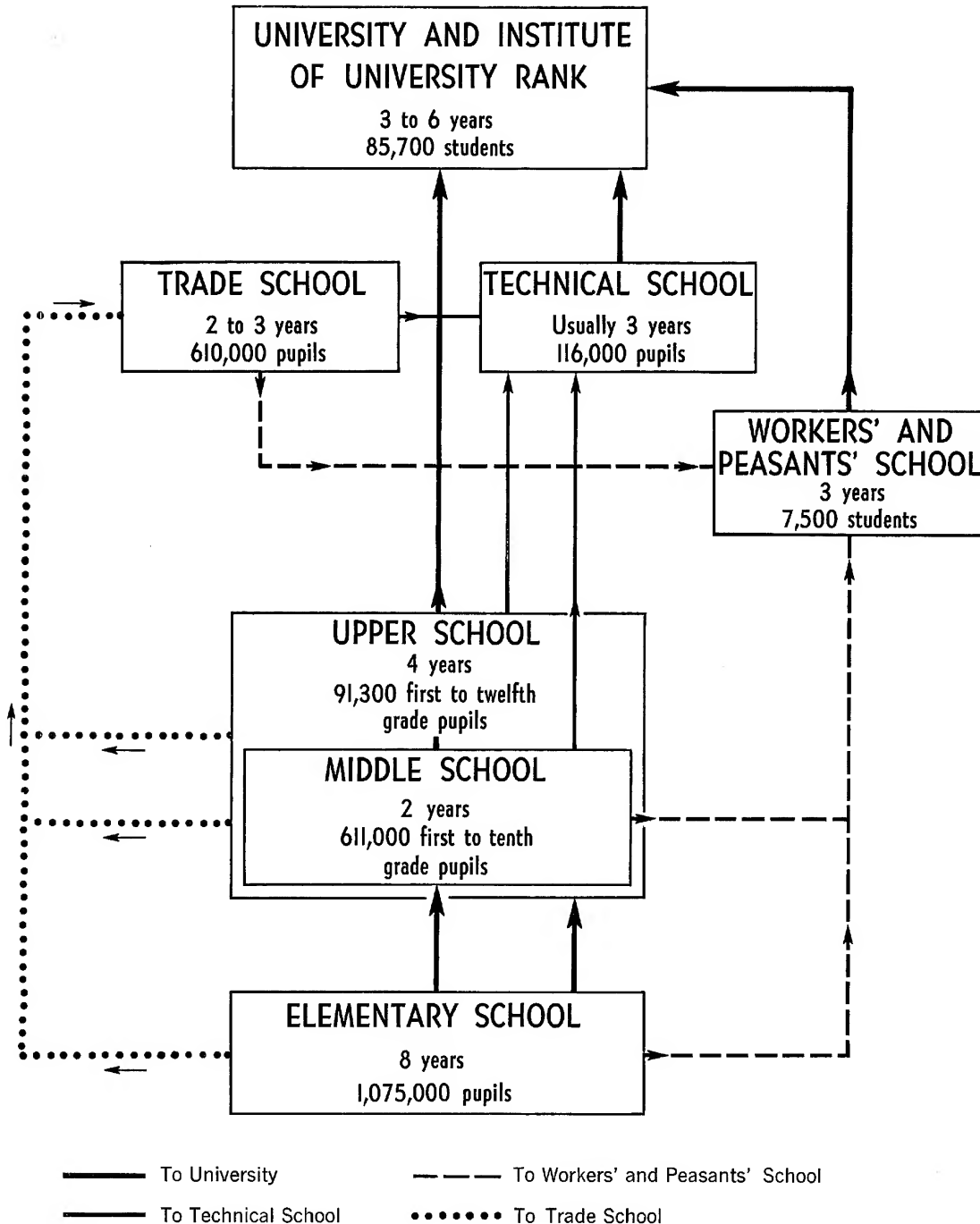
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EAST GERMANY EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM BEFORE THE REORGANIZATION (1957)



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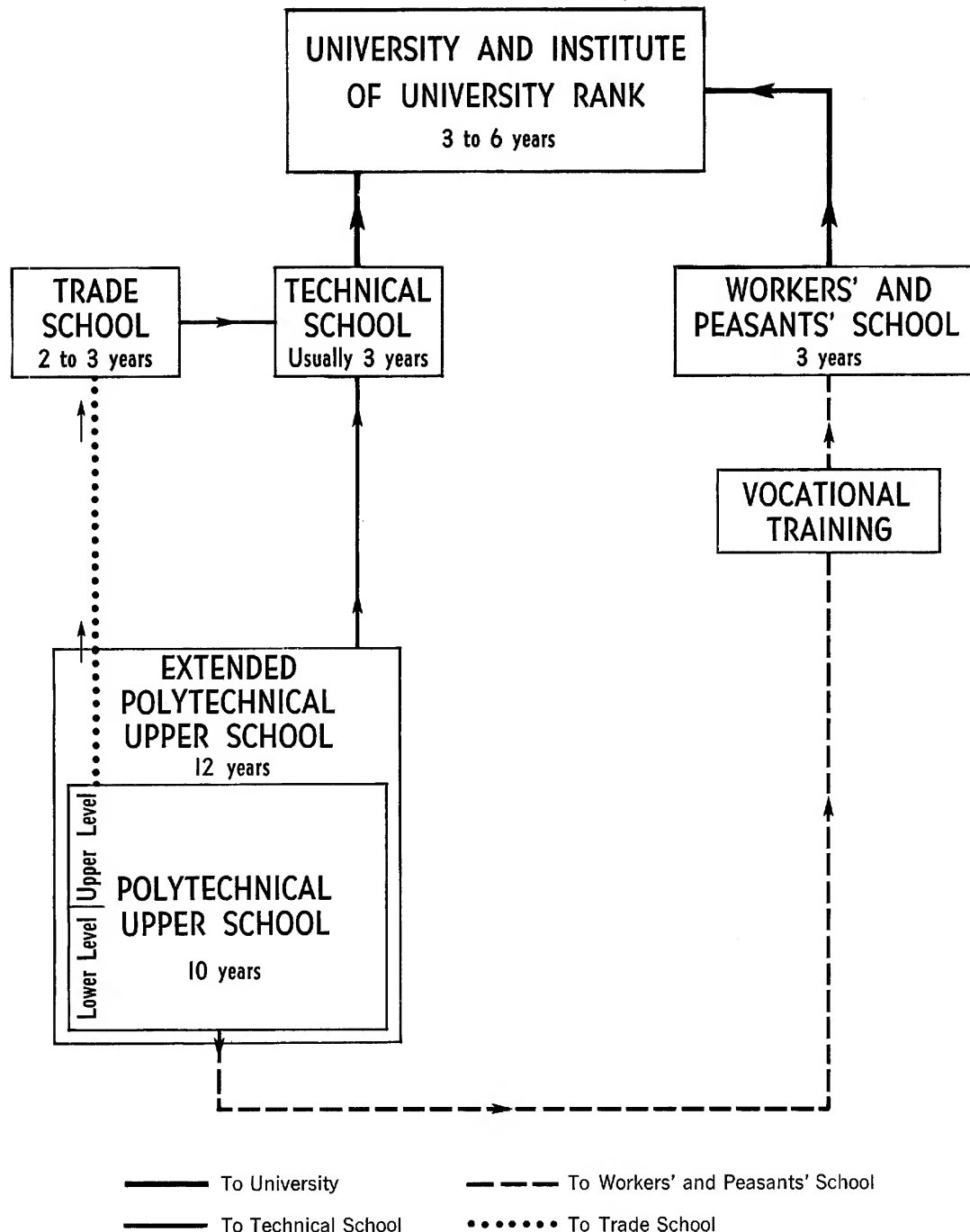
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